

On Track

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Editor's Notes

My how time flies! I am finally getting comfortable using MSWord, and here it is already the end of my term as the editor of **On Track**. Oh well, maybe I'll write my dissertation in MSWord (and Bill Gates keeps on getting richer). It has been a pleasure communicating back and forth with so many people in the fission track community, and I will miss that part of wearing the editor's hat the most.

In this issue of On Track: **Paul O'Sullivan** and **Asaf Raza** get back to the basics of zircon FT dating with the application of the method to the study of early hominid sites. There is a special announcement 31st International Geological Congress in Rio de Janeiro, August 6-17, 2000 by **Gérard Poupeau**. Gérard also tells us about his new book: *Man, obsidian, fission tracks and archaeology in the Near- and Middle-Orient* (Do I detect a kind of an archaeological theme developing here?). **Barry Kohn** provides an update on the 9th International Conference on Fission Track Dating and Thermochronology at Lorne, Australia. And finally I (as my alter ego) offer a tip on improving the purity of apatite separates.

I would like to thank **Ray Donelick** of Donelick Analytical, **Trevor Dumitru** of FT STAGE Systems, and **Mike Krochmal** of Autoscan Systems, who by ordering advertisements have permitted the continued free distribution of On Track. As in the previous issue, I would also like to thank **Marcos Zentilli**, who allowed me to work on On Track, and has thereby also subsidized production costs.

Finally, it is my pleasure now to introduce the next editor of On Track, **Richard Spikings**, from ETH-Zürich, the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology. Richard graduated from St. Andrews University, Scotland, in 1993 with a BSc. (hons) degree in Geochemistry. Fortunately, the Scottish system allots sufficient undergraduate curriculum time to research so that useful projects can be completed and Richard used the opportunity to map several carbonatitic remnants in central Namibia. Additionally, an ICP-MS analysis, studying REE partitioning, exposed some interesting aspects of the effects of alkaline metasomatism within carbonate rich crystalline rocks. His academic career then temporarily halted while he spent one year in the ranks as an infantry officer in Northern Ireland.

Richard's next academic appointment took him to La Trobe University, Melbourne, Australia to work as part of the thermochronology group commanded by Andy Gleadow. His research focused on determining the post-orogenic thermal and tectonic histories of the Palaeoproterozoic Mt. Isa and Georgetown inliers in northeastern Australia. ⁴⁰Ar/³⁹Ar and apatite FT thermochronology revealed various super-continent connections within the Australian Shield and he completed his Ph.D. in 1998. Smaller projects that Richard became involved with during his time at La Trobe included FT work along the eastern margin of Selawesi with the Indonesian Geological Survey and a small scale FT survey within Namibia with Prof. Peter Bowden. Since then, Richard has been based with the FT group at ETH-Zürich, Switzerland, led by Diane Seward. His main field of research at the ETH involves a detailed multi-phase ⁴⁰Ar/³⁹Ar and FT study within the Cretaceous eastern Cordillera of the Ecuadorian Andes (with Diane Seward, Wilfried

Winkler and Jean-Pierre Burg). Richard is investigating the relationship between the timing of Andean orogenic growth and the kinematics of the subducting slab, as well as the simultaneous development of the retro-foreland basin. The project will continue for at least two more years and will expand northwards into the Colombian Andes in order to more tightly define the relationship between the formation of the Caribbean and the northern Andean

Short Tracks: News

The following news items appeared magically in my e-mail box in the last few months. **John Garver** wrote to say that the FT lab at Union College in Schenectady, New York, has a new home (the F.W. Olin Center) a building that was designed, in part, for particle track studies at Union. The facilities include an FT counting room and an Alpha-track counting room in the main office complex, a mineral separation room in the basement, and a particle track lab which serves as the primary lab space for all particle track sample preparation, including annealing and etching (shared with **R. L. Fleischer**, who is currently working on Alpha tracks from radon preserved in eyeglasses). The new space is a vast improvement over the previous cramped quarters.

Raymond A. Donelick wrote to say that **Margaret B. Donelick** joined his company (Donelick Analytical, Inc.) as Vice-President several years ago after leaving Amoco Corporation and has been appointed Affiliated Assistant Professor at the University of Idaho (UI). Ray maintains his Adjunct Professorship at Rice University and is also an Affiliated Assistant Professor at UI. The company has also moved and is now located in Viola, Idaho (Ed: for the complete address, see ad in this issue).

Ana-Voica Bojar wrote to inform us that her lab at Karl-Franzens University in Graz, Austria, has just installed a new Fission Track stage from Trevor Dumitru, and that it works nicely (Ed.: Can I charge Trevor for this plug?)

Mike Hulver (Ph.D. Dissertation: Hulver, Michael L., 1997. Post-orogenic evolution of the Appalachian Mountain System and its Foreland. The University of Chicago, 1055 pages) wrote to inform us that in mid-December he left Argonne National Laboratory in the cold Chicago suburbs and moved to Saudi Arabia, to look for oil and gas with Saudi Aramco in Dhahran. He has been given, at least partially, the task of running a Regional Paleozoic Tectonic and Stratigraphy Project, and within a couple of months has gotten out into the field more than he had in the previous 5 years, looking at Paleozoic

sector. Other FT projects at ETH that Richard is involved with include the laboratory synthesis of apatite phases and their respective annealing kinetics, and geological investigations into the growth of the northern calcareous alps.

Please send all your future On Track submissions and news items to Richard's e-mail address: **Spikings@erdw.ethz.ch**.

sandstones in the southwestern corner of the country. He is currently reviewing some FT work that GEOTRACK did for Aramco in the early '90s, to see if it is worth while to do some more. He and his family are settling in nicely, and he hopes to make it to the Lorne FT conference (Ed.: Don't we all!).

Johan De Grave wrote to introduce himself to the FT community and inform us that he has started a Ph.D. project in fission tracks at the University of Gent, Belgium, under the supervision of Peter Van den haute, funded through the Institute of Sciences and Technology (also in collaboration with the Geology and Mineralogy Dept. of the Royal Museum of Central Africa, Brussels and the Dept. of Mineralogy, Geology and Geophysics of the University of Novosibirsk, Russia). The working title is Apatite FT thermochronology of some Central-Asian mountain belts. The initial focus is on the Altai mountains in the border zone of Russia, Mongolia, China and Kazakhstan. Some samples are now in hand, and this summer another fieldtrip is planned. If time permits he will consider dating zircon samples as well, and/or sampling other terrains (probably in the Tien Shan mountains in Kyrgyzstan).

His address is: Johan De Grave, Dept. of Mineralogy, Petrology and Micropedology Krijgslaan 281/S8, B-9000 Gent, Belgium. Tel.: ++32 (0)9 264 45 64 Fax : ++32 (0)9 264 49 84.

Phil Armstrong wants to let everyone know that he is setting up an FT lab at Calif. State Univ., Fullerton, and wants to inquire about where to get his hands on glass and sample age standards. Phil's background is in structure and thermal geophysics with a fairly strong background in FT interpretation (working with Peter Kamp in NZ. (Ed.: Unfortunately, Phil doesn't yet have an e-mail address at Calif. State yet, but if anyone wants to get in touch, his new address is in the Int. Directory in the issue.)

And finally, **John Decker** (or was it his automated message service?) e-mailed me to say that he is no longer with ARCO, and has moved to Balikpapan, on the island of Borneo, where he receives money from Unocal. His family will follow sometime in the summer. His new e-mail address is: **jdecker@unocal.com**.

Slightly longer Tracks: Improve apatite separates using dilute M.I.

by Sandy Grist

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The most common problem that I have encountered in the latter stages of purification of apatite separates is the presence of carbonates, quartz and other felsic mineral grains which should have been removed during initial heavy liquid separation using tetrabromoethane (TBE) or sodium polytungstate (SPT). This is especially true for me now that I do almost all my initial SPT separations in large open-topped centrifuge bottles and remove the 'lights' using a large spoon (There is always a small amount of the light fraction reintroduced into the liquid during the 'spooning-out' process.). However, I am not alone in this, nearly all the samples that I receive as concentrates need additional purification to remove either contaminating felsic minerals or zircons that have been introduced to the separate because they adhered to the inside wall of the separatory funnel during TBE or MI separation. I used to remove the contamination the only way that I knew of, which was by redoing as necessary the TBE and MI.

One particularly difficult sample that I processed consisted of about 500-800 apatite grains in about 15 grams of carbonate (I believe it was dolomite.) and represented about a week of nearly impossible picking. The technique that I used instead took about 45 minutes resulted in a separate that was >95% pure apatite.

It is done like this. You fill a 125 ml squibb separatory funnel with MI (s.g. = 3.3 g/cm³) to height of the base of the painted-on white oval or hexagon (where the maker intends you to write your sample number) which represents about 75-80 ml of liquid. Add your sample. (If any starts to sink, redo the standard MI separation and after you draw off the heavies, refill the funnel to the base of the oval with MI again. This

removes any contamination by zircons.) Here is good part. Add between 6 and 10 ml of acetone (s.g. = 0.8 g/cm³) to the top of the liquid (I use a wash bottle to wash any grains down on the inside of the funnel.) and stir vigorously. If you add 6 ml of acetone the resulting liquid has an s.g. of 3.1 g/cm³, and apatite barely sinks. If you add 10 ml, the resulting liquid has an s.g. of 3.0 g/cm³ and the apatite readily sinks. In practice I add the acetone until the layer of acetone is about 5 mm thick (Hey, its not rocket science.). Remove the stirrer, and cap tightly (otherwise the acetone begins to evaporate from the top of the liquid and you get density driven convection, which is not helpful.). After about a half-hour you can draw off the heavy fraction (MI-medium) and all of the quartz and carbonate contamination will be in the light fraction.

The only apparent drawback with this method is that if you are processing many samples you end up diluting a substantial amount MI, and since it is expensive, most of us don't have a large volume of it to begin with. The way around this is to keep the dilute MI apart from the MI wash, and blow a bit of air over it for about 2 hours. This drives off all the acetone, and restores the density (check it with a piece of Durango). This means that you can do one group of samples in the morning and another in the afternoon.

This method represents an improvement over redoing TBE and MI for impure samples because it is done in 1 funnel in 1 step, and because the density of the dilute MI is higher than that of TBE, so your separate is purer. The need to streamline the separation process and to remove much-hated TBE from my life has led me to this refinement that I believe produces consistently, significantly better apatite separates, often nearly 100% pure.

Special Announcement: 31st International Geological Congress, Rio de Janeiro, August 6-17, 2000

by Gérard Poupeau

ESA-CNRS, Université Joseph Fourier, 15 rue Maurice Gignoux
38031 Grenoble, France

Year 2000 might be a very fruitful one for fission-trackers, with two international get-togethers : in addition to the Lorne meeting in February (see announcement in this issue), there will be one session of the Rio de Janeiro 31st IGC partly devoted to FT dating. Those of you who received the first circular may have noted that sub-Symposium 18-1 on Geochronology was entitled "Fission track, Thermoluminescence and Cathodoluminescence". This session was proposed under the initiative of Ariadne do Carmo Fonseca, from the Federal University of Ceará at Fortaleza. Following an IGC-31 Scientific Committee meeting held on last month, this title has now been reformulated as "Fission track, Thermoluminescence, Electron Spin Resonance and Optical dating", with three conveners, Gérard Poupeau and Ariadne do Carmo Fonseca for FTD, and Gérard Poupeau and Alexandre M. Rossi for the other methods.

There will be one half-day poster session and another one for a few selected talks and round tables. We remind you that abstracts, of no more than 250 words, must be submitted before September 1st. We count on your participation.

Rio de Janeiro and the Guanabara bay are one of the world most fantastic sites. We will be happy to welcome you there. Remember also that Brazil has a rich and varied geology and that many field trips are proposed in the frame of the congress.

General information on IGC31 can be found on the Congress web site :

<http://www.31igc.org>

You can also consult the conveners at:

**poupeau@ujf-grenoble.fr ; ariadne@ufc.br or
ariadne@degeo.ufc.br ; rossi@cbpf.br**

Man, obsidian, fission tracks and archaeology in the Near- and Middle-Orient

by Gérard Poupeau

Fission-track dating of obsidian started from the early times of fission-track dating, as its application to archaeology. Although "burnt" obsidians might help in the dating of archaeological sites (albeit with large uncertainties), the conjuncture is a rare one (only a few published cases) and the "standard" application of obsidian FT dating in archaeology is about provenance studies.

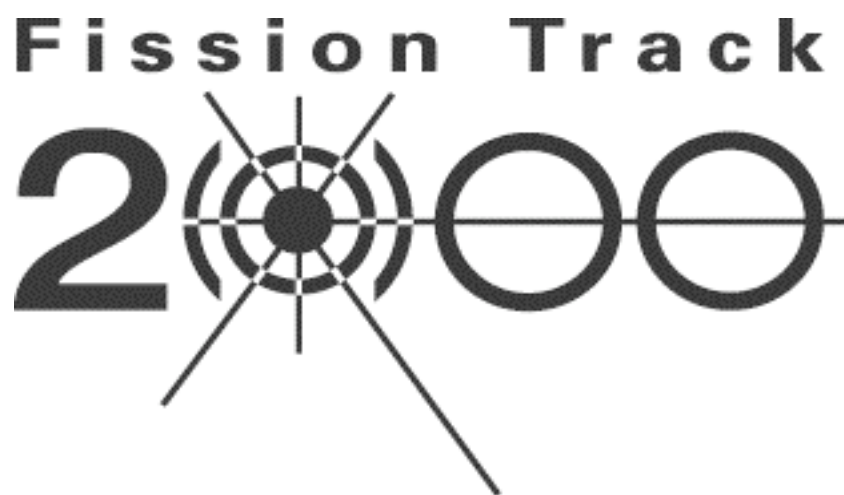
Provenance studies of prehistoric obsidian artifacts (from which volcano, primary, or secondary source, came the raw material for tool-knapping?) were initiated in Japan by the end of the sixties, in the Mediterranean and Near- to Middle-Orient regions since the seventies and along the Andean belt of South America in the eighties. This approach was applied concurrently to or in conjunction with the more traditional geochemical one.

In the Near- and Middle-Orient, obsidian is present in archaeological sites about 14,000 a BP. A collective book on the present status of obsidian studies in this region, including FT provenance studies: *L'obsidienne au Proche et Moyen Orient. Du volcan à l'outil** ("Obsidian in the Near and Middle Orient,

from volcano to tool"), was published late last year. It is organized into two parts, respectively on Geology, Geochemistry, and Chronometry, and on Archaeology. Each part is divided into eight essays. The first ones are about methods of obsidian characterization, with comprehensive reviews of chemical composition and age (K-Ar, fission track) data on geological obsidians and obsidian artifacts. The second ones are about obsidian artifacts, with chapters on case studies, the symbolic meaning of obsidian, the distribution of obsidian in archaeological sites of the area considered since nearly 14,000 a BP to the post-Neolithic, and one chapter on the history of the word "obsidian".

The book is mostly written in French, with two English essays on FT dating, by Poupeau, Bigazzi et al. on methodology and Bigazzi, Poupeau et al. on a review of relevant FT data, and a third one by Blackman et al. on the chemical composition of Caucasian obsidians.

*Edited by M.-C. Cauvin, A. Gourgaud, N. Arnaud, G. Poupeau, J.-L. Poidevin et C. Chataigner, BAR International Series 738, Archaeopress, Oxford (England), 1998, pp. 388.



Conference Update

More than 130 scientists have responded to the first circular for the 9th International Conference on Fission Track Dating and Thermochronology to be held in Lorne, Australia on 6-11 February, 2000. To date about 85 oral presentations and 45 posters have been offered.

Expressions of interest in the Conference have been received from more than 25 different countries indicating a wide interest in fission track analysis and its modern applications in Earth and related sciences. The Conference promises to bring a truly international perspective to the present state of Fission Track Dating and Thermochronology.

There has also been an enthusiastic response to participation in each of the pre- and post-conference excursions outlined in the first circular. The numbers are certainly sufficient for us to organize these trips, so these will now be offered. An accompanying persons program is also planned. Lorne is a superb conference setting, and the Organizing Committee assures delegates and accompanying persons that a stimulating and memorable meeting is being organized.

The second circular will be posted on the conference web site from July 1, 1999 at:

<http://ft2000.unimelb.edu.au>

Please consult this site for further details and take note of organizational deadlines.

Getting back to basics: Implications for zircon fission track ages for tuffs associated with hominid sites in central Flores, Indonesia

by Paul B. O'Sullivan and Asaf Raza

Victorian Institute of Earth and Planetary Sciences, La Trobe University,
Bundoora, Victoria, 3083, Australia.

NOTE: The discussion below is a summary of recently published zircon fission track results. The results and implications are presented herein purely to highlight a use of fission track dating that doesn't seem to have been used much over the last few years. For the original and complete text please see:

Morwood, M.J., O'Sullivan, P.B., Aziz, F., and Raza, A., 1998, Fission track ages of stone tools and fossils in central Flores, Indonesia: *Nature*, v. 392, p. 173-176.

Abstract

It has long been argued that early hominids did not possess the ability to cross large expanses of open water and therefore could not radiate from the western islands of Indonesia across "Wallace's line" into eastern Indonesia and then into Australia until ~40,000-60,000 years ago. To test this theory, zircon fission track ages have been determined for tuffaceous deposits containing fossils and stone artifacts in the Ola Bula Formation, central Flores, Indonesia, which lies to the east of "Wallace's line". Primary igneous zircons from a tuff located at the base of the Tangi Talo artifact site indicate an age of 0.90 ± 0.07 Myr, while zircons obtained for tuffs located immediately below and within a deposit containing stone artifacts from the Mata Menge locality gave ages of 0.88 ± 0.07 and 0.80 ± 0.07 Myr respectively. Since at least two long-distance water crossings must have occurred to reach Flores, these findings imply that early hominids had greater capabilities than previously suggested.

Introduction

Prior to human intervention the Wallacean islands located between the Asian and Australian continental areas (Fig. 1), had impoverished terrestrial faunas comprised of species capable of making water crossings and then establishing biologically viable populations. With a few exceptions, mammals on the Wallacean islands were originally derived from continental S.E. Asia and must have arrived by swimming, rafting on flotsam, or flight (e.g., Johnson, 1980). Evidence from the island of Java, which at various times during Pleistocene sea level fluctuations was connected to the Asian mainland, suggests the earliest hominid species, *Homo erectus*,

first appeared in S.E. Asia between 1.0 and 1.8 Ma (de Vos & Sondaar, 1994). To move eastward from Java across "Wallace's line" to the Wallacean islands required the use of watercraft in order to make sea crossings of at least 20 km, even at times of low sea level. This is generally believed to have been beyond the capacity of *Homo erectus* populations, therefore the islands of eastern Indonesia were not occupied until as recently as 40,000 and 60,000 years ago (e.g., Davidson & Noble, 1992). However, zircon fission track dates from two locations on the island of Flores indicate that by the Middle Pleistocene *H. erectus* had successfully progressed eastward across "Wallace's line" and therefore must have possessed the ability to use watercraft to make sea crossings of at least 20 km.

Background Information

Tangi Talo and Mata Menge are two of the many palaeontological sites located in the Ola Bula Formation of the upper Ae Sissa River basin, central Flores (Fig. 1). The Ola Bula is a maximum of 80 meters thick and comprises tuffaceous sediments underlying later fluvial deposits (Fig. 2; Lumbanbatu & Aziz 1994; Morwood et al., 1997). At the base of Tangi Talo the remains of an endemic fauna occur in a white tuffaceous deposit about 1 meter thick, and although angular volcanic rock fragments are locally present in the deposits, none of these have characteristics suggesting that they are artifacts (Morwood et al., 1997). Paleomagnetic determinations showed that deposits at Tangi Talo were dominated by reverse polarities but contained two levels with normal polarities. These were interpreted to represent the Jaramillo normal polarity subzone with a date of ~900,000 BP (Sondaar et al., 1994).

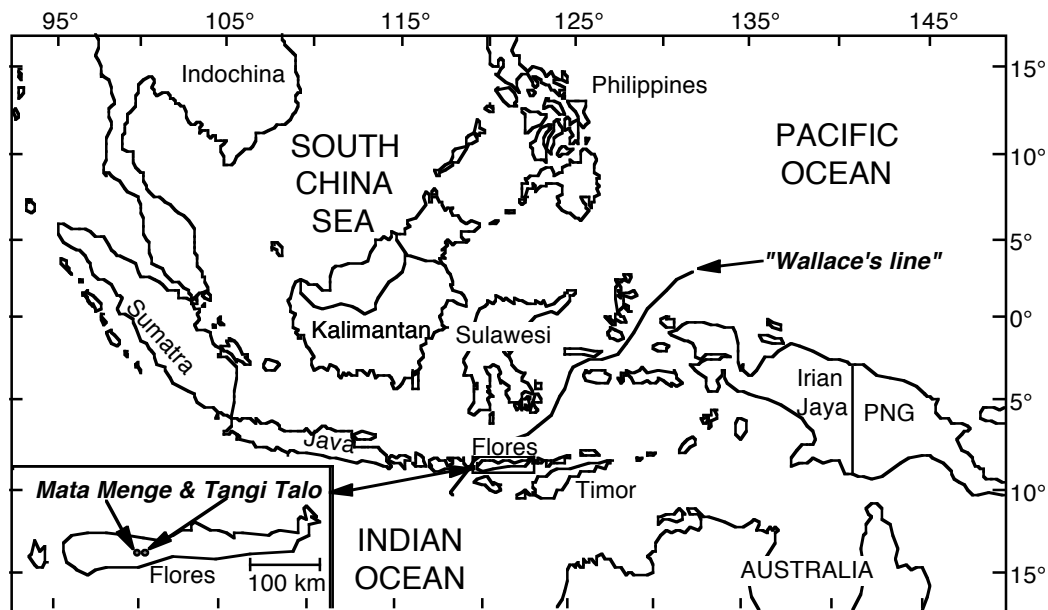


Figure 1: Regional location map showing the islands of Indonesia, including Flores, the approximate locations of the Mata Menge and Tengi Talo archeology sites, and "Wallace's line".

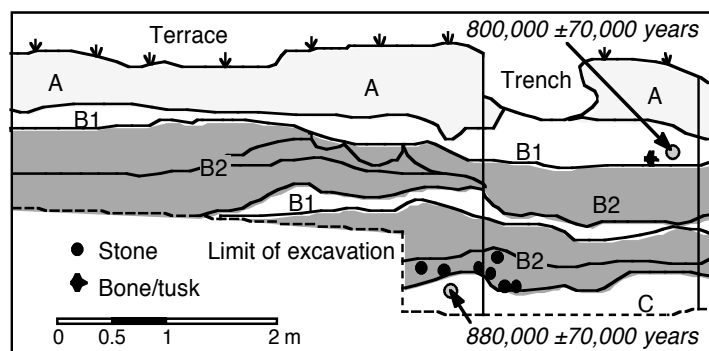


Figure 2: The west baulk of the excavations at Mata Menge showing the locations and calculated ages of the fission track samples. Three main stratigraphic units are evident. Unit A is a layer of weathered sandstone and topsoil. Unit B comprises layers of white volcanic tuff (B1) and tuffaceous sandstone (B2), which contains all the stone artifacts identified in the section. Unit C is pink volcanic tuff, which does not contain fossils or stone artifacts.

At Mata Menge endemic fauna as well as pieces of volcanic rock and chert previously identified as artifacts (e.g., Maringer & Verhoeven, 1970; Morwood et al., 1997), occur in a horizontal fluvial layer up to 120 cm thick (Unit B, Fig. 2). At the base of Unit B is a homogeneous, pink tuffaceous silt (Unit C), which contains neither fossils nor stone artifacts. In addition, since Ola Bula lies near to and 31 meters stratigraphically above Tengi Talo, Mata Menge is younger than Tengi Talo. Paleomagnetic determinations showed that deposits at Mata Menge contained a reversed-normal transition in deposits 3

meters below the fossil-rich, Unit B, which was interpreted as representing the Matuyama-Brunhes boundary (Sondaar et al., 1994). The excavators thereby inferred a date of slightly less than 730,000 BP for the faunal remains - although a date of about 780,000 BP for this event is more likely (see Berggren et al., 1990). The reverse polarities indicated that deposits of the Ola Bula Formation just below the fossil deposits at Tengi Talo and Mata Menge were older than the 780,000 year-old Matuyama-Brunhes boundary, but the paleomagnetic work did not date the fossil deposits themselves.

Zircon fission track results and interpretations

In an attempt to constrain the age of the deposits and artifacts at Mata Menge and Tangi Talo, samples for zircon fission track dating were collected from three tuffaceous horizons. This method of radiometric dating is ideal for dating young deposits as shown previously by Gleadow (1980). The stratigraphic positions of the two samples taken from Mata Menge are shown in Fig. 2: sample MM1 comprised a block of the red tuffaceous deposit immediately below the lowest fossils and identified stone artifacts, while MM2 was taken from a white tuffaceous deposit next to a large *Stegodon* tusk. In addition, TT1 was taken from the white tuffaceous layer at Tangi Talo next to an in situ Pygmy *Stegodon* tusk and pieces of *Geochelone* carapace. Deposition of these tuffs in their present locations is thought to have occurred rapidly after the eruptions which produced them, therefore measured ages of the primary igneous zircons can be related directly to the stratigraphic ages

of the tuffaceous layers and the fossils they contain (e.g., Gleadow, 1980).

A minimum of 50-60 individual zircon grains were dated from each sample. Afterwards, data from grains deemed to be obvious contamination, based on their significantly older ages, were removed before a final age calculation was made. Analytical results are shown in Table 1 for both primary and reworked zircons from the three tuffaceous samples. Distributions of the primary grain ages from each sample are shown in Figure 3. It can be seen that the Tangi Talo sample (TT1) yielded a date of 0.90 ± 0.07 Myr, while the two Mata Menge samples (MM1 and MM2) yielded dates of 0.88 ± 0.07 and 0.80 ± 0.07 Myr respectively (Morwood et al., 1998). Furthermore, each sample contained between 4 and 7 older reworked zircons that gave ages of between 7 and 14 Myr, significantly older than the primary zircons (Table 1). These older contaminants also contained significantly lower amounts of Uranium, a factor which could also have been used to delineate between the primary and contaminate zircons.

Table 1. Fission track analytical results: Tuffaceous samples from Flores, Indonesia.

Sample Number (# grains)	Lat. (°S) Long. (°E)	Unit name	Standard track density ($\times 10^5 \text{cm}^{-2}$)	Fossil track density ($\times 10^5 \text{cm}^{-2}$)	Induced track density ($\times 10^6 \text{cm}^{-2}$)	Chi squared probability (%)	Uranium (ppm)	Fission track age (Ma $\pm 1\sigma$)
<i>Primary Zircon - Mata Menge</i>								
MM1 (44)	8°20' 121°30'	Ola Bula	4.060 (1631)	1.139 (199)	3.311 (5784)	33.1	318.0	0.88 ± 0.07
MM2 (53)	8°20' 121°30'	Ola Bula	4.087 (1631)	1.040 (189)	3.340 (6067)	15.1	318.7	0.80 ± 0.07
<i>Primary Zircon - Tangi Talo</i>								
TT1 (56)	? ?	Ola Bula	4.114 (1631)	1.195 (184)	3.441 (5297)	100.0	326.2	0.90 ± 0.07
<i>Detrital contamination - Mata Menge</i>								
MM1 (6)	-	-	-4.060 (1631)	9.171 (229)	1.766 (441)	0.0	169.7	9.8 ± 3.1
MM2 (7)	-	-	-4.087 (1631)	4.200 (98)	1.642 (383)	0.1	156.6	7.5 ± 1.7
<i>Detrital contamination - Tangi Talo</i>								
TT1 (4)	-	-	-4.114 (1631)	0.136 (89)	1.312 (86)	0.0	124.4	14.0 ± 8.3

Brackets show number of tracks counted. Standard and induced track densities measured on mica external detectors ($g=0.5$), and fossil track densities on internal mineral surfaces. Zircon ages calculated using $\text{zeta}=125.5 \pm 3$ for dosimeter glass CN1 (analyst: P. O'Sullivan).

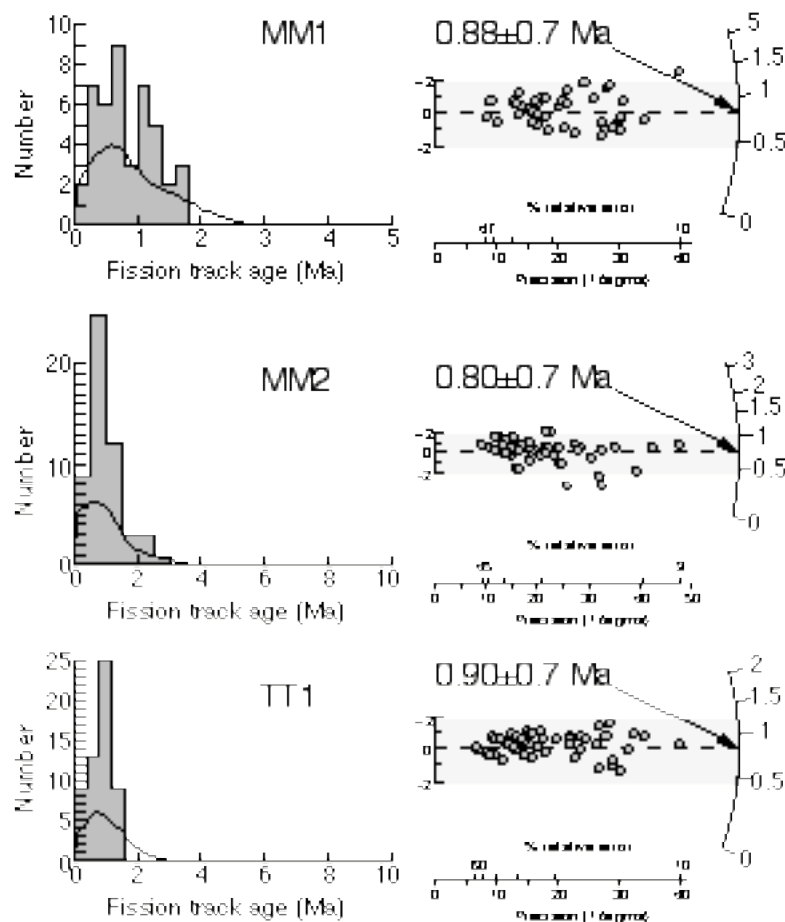


Figure 3: Single grain age results in the form of simple histograms and radial plots from the three Mata Menge and Tangi Talo tuffaceous units.

The zircon dates indicate that the endemic fauna at Tangi Talo are ~0.90 Myr old and appear to predate evidence for hominids on Flores, while the Mata Menge dates indicate that hominids had colonized the island by ~0.88-0.80 Myr. These results confirm the claims originally made by Maringer & Verhoeven (1970) for the Middle Pleistocene age of fossil faunas and stone artifacts at Mata Menge. They also closely match the dates for Tangi Talo and Mata Menge suggested previously on the basis of paleomagnetic determinations. Furthermore, these findings indicate that *H. erectus* had the capacity to make water crossings of up to 20 km distance from which there are a number of implications. Firstly, the complex logistic organization needed to build watercraft capable of transporting a biologically and socially viable group implies that *H. erectus* must have had language. Previously the organizational and linguistic capacity required for sea voyaging was thought to be the prerogative of modern humans and to have only appeared in the late Pleistocene (Davidson & Noble, 1992). Finally, the colonization of Flores in the Middle Pleistocene indicates that the technological capacity of early hominid populations may have been seriously underestimated. The recent

discovery of well-designed, well-crafted and possibly composite spears at the 400,000 year old Schöningen kill site in Germany supports this view (Thieme, 1997). Elsewhere, the capacity of hominids to undertake even limited water crossings is not evident until much later.

References

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Recent Fission-Track Papers

Here is a list of recently or soon-to-be published fission track papers that were submitted by the authors for inclusion in this issue of *On Track*. I am grateful to the authors for the information. If you have a paper that you would like to see listed in this section, please send the complete reference or a photocopy of the first page to the editor. A copy of the entire paper would also be appreciated. We are also interested in non-fission-track papers that may be of special interest to the fission-track community. Papers in press are welcome, please include an estimate of the expected month of publication.

Bllot-Gurlet L., Calligaro Th., Dorighel O., Dran J.-C., Poupeau G. et Salomon J. (1998) PIXE analysis and fission track dating of obsidian from South American prehispanic cultures : an insight over the circulation of a lithic industry raw material, *Nuclear Instruments and Methods B*, 150, 616-621.

Bigot-Cormier F., Poupeau G., Sosson M., Stiphan J.-F., Labrin E., Ziad N. et Schwartz S. (1999) Fission-track record and exhumation rates of the Argentera External Crystalline Massif (Western Alps, France-Italy), "Fission-Track Analysis: Theory and Applications", Chatillon (Italie), 11-14 Juillet, extended abstract (in press)

Garver, J.I., Soloviev, A.V., Bullen, M.E., Brandon, M.T., 1999, Exhumation of Okhotsk-Chukotka and West Kamchatka arcs recorded by detrital fission-track ages of zircon from Ukelayat Flysch, Kamchatka: *European Geophysical Society, The Hague, Netherlands*, April 1999.

Huntoon, J.E., Hansley, P.L., and Naeser, N.D., 1999, The search for a source rock for the giant Tar Sand triangle accumulation, southeastern Utah: *American Association of Petroleum Geologists Bulletin*, v. 83, no. 3, p. 467-495.

Miller, E.L., Dumitru, T.A., Brown, R.W., Gans, P.B. 1999, Rapid Miocene slip on the Snake Range-Deep Creek

Range fault system, east-central Nevada, *Geological Society of America Bulletin*, v. 111, no. 6, p. 886-905.

Naeser, N.D., Naeser, C.W., Morgan, B.A., III, Schultz A.P., and Southworth, C.S., 1999, Cooling history of the Blue Ridge Province, Virginia, North Carolina and Tennessee, from apatite and zircon fission-track analysis [abs.]: *Geological Society of America Abstracts with Programs*, v. 31, no. 3, p. A-32.

Naeser, N.D., Isaacs, C.M., and Keller, M.A., 1999, Regional thermal maturity of surface rocks, onshore Santa Maria basin and Santa Barbara-Ventura basin area, California, in Keller, M.A., ed., *Evolution of sedimentary basins/onshore oil and gas investigations--Santa Maria province: U.S. Geological Survey Bulletin 1995-X*, 31 p.; 1 color plate, scale 1:750,000.

[note: Naeser, N.D., Isaacs, C.M., and Keller, M.A., 1999 is a non-fission-track paper, but is included because it discusses the correlation and limitations of a number of other thermal maturity indicators widely used in basin analysis, including Rock-Eval pyrolysis data, vitrinite reflectance, and Thermal Alteration Index (TAI)]

Soloviev, A., Garver, J.I., and Shapiro, M., 1999, Timing of arc-continent collision using fission track ages of detrital zircon from the Lesnaya Group, Kamchatka Peninsula, Russia. *European Geophysical Society The Hague, Netherlands*, April 1999.

Call for Contributions to the May/June 2000 On Track issue 19

The next issue of On Track is scheduled for release in late May/June, 2000 and we are looking for contributions. On Track welcomes contributions of virtually any kind, including news, gossip, job openings, descriptions of new lab techniques, reviews of useful products, raving editorials about what all the other labs are doing wrong, meeting announcements, cartoons, and descriptions of what you are doing in your research.

If you would like to contribute, **PLEASE** send the final text no later than May 15, 2000. If you propose to submit a substantial article, **PLEASE** let the editor know ASAP.

On Track includes a list of recent and forthcoming Fission Track papers. If you know of a paper that was published recently or is in press and should appear in the near future, please let me know so that it can be added to the list. Also, if you happen to move locations (or know someone who has moved) due to a change in jobs or finishing off the thesis and graduating, please inform us.

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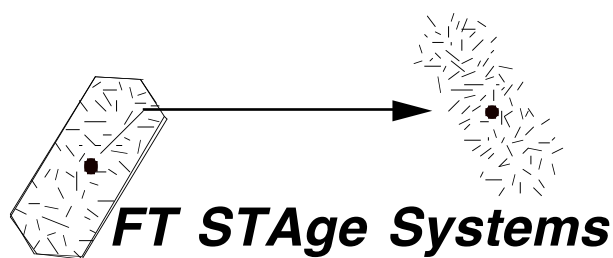
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Fission Track Laboratories Using the System (year installed):

(*adapted to a non-Kinetek stage)

- Stanford University, Stanford, California (1991)
- University of California, Santa Barbara, California (1992)
- ARCO Exploration and Production Technology, Plano, Texas (1992). Moved to University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, Minnesota, in 1999.
- Universität Bremen, Bremen, Germany (1993)
- E.T.H., Zürich, Switzerland (1993*)
- Kent State University, Kent, Ohio (1993)
- University of Wyoming, Laramie, Wyoming (1993)
- University of Arizona, Tucson, Arizona (1993)
- Max-Planck-Institut, Heidelberg, Germany (1993*)
- Union College, Schenectady, New York (1994)
- Monash University, Melbourne, Australia (1994*). Moved to University of Melbourne in 1999.
- La Trobe University, Melbourne, Australia (two systems, 1994*). Moved to University of Melbourne in 1999.
- University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (1995)
- Universität Tübingen, Tübingen, Germany, (1995)
- Universidad Central de Venezuela, Caracas, Venezuela (1995)
- Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah (1995)
- Central Research Institute of the Electric Power Industry, Chiba, Japan (1995)
- Universität Salzburg, Salzburg, Austria (1996)
- University of Southern California, Los Angeles, California (1996)
- E.T.H., Zürich, Switzerland (second system, 1996*)
- Geologisk Centralinstitut, Copenhagen, Denmark (1996*)
- University of Waikato, Hamilton, New Zealand (1996*)
- Università di Bologna, Bologna, Italy (1997)
- Centro di Studio di Geologia dell'Appennino e delle Catene Perimediteranee, Florence, Italy (1997)
- University of Wyoming, Laramie, Wyoming (second system, 1997)
- Universität Potsdam, Potsdam, Germany (1997)
- Seoul National University, Seoul, Korea (1998)
- E.T.H., Zürich, Switzerland (third system, 1998)
- Universität Basel, Basel, Switzerland (1998)
- University of Florida, Gainesville, Florida (1998)
- Université Paris-XI, Paris, France (1998)
- Universität Graz, Graz, Austria (1998)
- Göteborgs Universitet, Göteborg, Sweden (1998)
- Universidad de Cádiz, Cádiz, Spain (1999)

Further Information:

An early version of the system is described in Nuclear Tracks and Radiation Measurements, vol. 21, p. 575-580, Oct. 1993 (1992 Philadelphia Fission Track Workshop volume). For detailed written information please contact: Dr. Trevor Dumitru, 4100 Campana Drive, Palo Alto, California 94306, U.S.A., telephone (auto-switching voice/fax line): 1-650-725-6155

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The last page!

By: Anon E. Mous

What's in a Name?

People often see or hear whatever they are expecting to see or hear. It's like waiting for a bus. Every vehicle that appears on the horizon looks like your bus. As a case in point, we are a lab that operates inside a university, and sometimes people phone looking for some other department. I always answer the phone like this:

"Good morning/afternoon, fission track lab." (just in case it's someone important calling to either offer me a job or ask about our commercial rate for a batch of 150 samples). Here is a sampling of some of the responses that I get to that greeting. (Some are not that far from the truth.)

"Fraction tricks?" (looking for Mathematics and Statistics Department, or Tracker)

"Friction traps?" (Physics)

"Vision tricks?" (Neuropsychology)

"Bric-a-bracs?" (History)

"Fishing trips?" (Marine Biology, No we don't go out in the boats to collect samples.)

"Fission chips?" (Physics again)

"Yea, I'd like to book a squash court." (Sportsplex)

"Fish tracks?" (Oceanography) (Ed. Note: Fish do not leave tracks!)

"Traction pits?" (Mechanical Engineering)

"Vision trips?" (Comparative Religion)

"Fish and chips?" (Cafeteria)

"Chicken strips?" (Cafeteria again, its nearly lunchtime)

"Faction trash?" (Political Science)

"Fiction facts?" (Literature or Philosophy, not sure)

"Yea, I'd like to book a squash court." (Sure, when would you like it? Ok, see you then. Bye)